2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

C 622 *anétsiäs vuh*, exerting a certain social influence. Chieftainship however, among the Choroti is rather nominal than real; even the »great chief» is in fact destitute of power, although in relation to other tribes and to the whites he exercises certain representative functions. Thus when commissions from the sugar factories arrived in the Chaco to negotiate about the sending of Indian labourers to northern Argentine, they had to deal with the chiefs, who through the medium of interpreters gave them answers on behalf of their people. But even the »great chiefs» cannot compel anybody to work, nor can they interfere with the private affairs of the families, in which the father and the mother have full liberty of action. Still more imaginary is the power of the village chief, who is nothing but a *pater familias* enjoying a certain esteem. He cannot command anybody, but merely represents his village community in relation to outsiders, just as the »great chief» represents the whole sub-tribe.

C M 622 The dignity of chief is not hereditary among the Choroti, nor apparently among the Mataco. When the chief dies, the oldest family fathers of the community assemble under the big algaroba tree which serves as a club-house and elect a new chief, the election taking place in connection with a drinking-feast.

C 388 621 Old men are generally held in great esteem, and the chiefs are generally, although not invariably, men of advanced age. Among the Choroti, old men are held in particular esteem for superstitious reasons, since they are believed to be changed, after death, into evil spirits. As we shall see later on in the chapter on the religion of the Indians, the spirits of the Choroti are believed to appear in the shape of old men. Since the natural magical power of the human body is increased with advancing age, it is natural that old people are feared, but the supernatural halo which surrounds them of course at the same time is apt to give them social influence. Above all their supposed connection with the spirits makes them qualified to exercise religious functions. Independent of any particular initiation, every old man is credited with the power of conjuring the spirits and is thus always more or less a sorcerer. If therefore we wish to speak of a social distinction among the Choroti, we may say that the sorcerers, called *ayïeu*, are the only members of the Choroti society who in a certain sense form a class of their own or mark the beginnings of a social differentiation. Since, however, every old man is more or less expert in the act of magic and considered able to handle the rattle gourd (*pelïle*) or the drum (*usyúk*), the *ayïeu* of the Choroti cannot be called professional sorcerers in the strict sense of the word.

C 388 754 565

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Toba SL12
Choroti SK6

Social classes do not exist among the Choroti, nor any distinction between rich and poor. All members of this primitive society are equally rich or equally poor and, owing to the great social sympathy which unites them, property is in practice to a great extent common to all. The relative communism or socialism existing among the lowest Chaco tribes will be touched upon later.

The social organization of the *Mataco* was originally the same as that of the Choroti, but the Mataco-Nocténes of Bolivia have in this as in other respects been considerably influenced by the Tobas and probably also by the Avas, and therefore at present stand socially higher than the primitive Choroti. As to the *Tobas*, in their social organization they are much superior to the Choroti, although their society is essentially founded on the same principles. Even among the Tobas the »tribe» is in its essence only a group of families united by the tie of blood-relationship. But whereas among the Choroti the chief is nothing but a respected family father without real power, the Toba chief, called *alyánek*, seems to exercise a considerable authority, at least in time of war. Although the Tobas have not been conquerors in the same sense as the Avas, they have always been a warlike race of Indians, and such peoples generally have more strongly organized societies than those who have never or only rarely tried their strength in fighting against enemies and have not grown accustomed to the order and discipline which war requires.

Social ranks and classes in the strict sense of the words do not exist among the Tobas, just as they are unknown to the Avas; but we can trace the germ of a nobility in the fact that the sons and descendants of a great cacique or war chief generally enjoy greater esteem than other members of the society. The chiefs have power to command, especially in times of war, when their orders are unfailingly obeyed. They distingush themselves from the rest of their people by having several wives and often by being richer, since of the spoils taken in war the main part is allotted to them. Formerly they also distingushed themselves externally from other men by a peculiar arrangement of the hair. According to the Catholic missionaries Dobrizhoffer and Charlevoix, [1]) all Guaycurú tribes used to pluck out the hair from the forehead to the crown of the head so that the forepart was bald. This arrangement, which had magic significance, was called *nalemrá*, and was the reason why the Tobas were called by the Spaniards

[1]) Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, II. 17. Charlevoix, *Historia del Paraguay*, I. 135.